

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Page 2, line 2: delete "Claims 1 or 2" and insert therefor --the invention--.

Page 3, line 18: delete "Other special versions of the invention are described in Claims 3 to 9".

Page 3, line 21: delete "according to Patent Claim 1,".

Page 3, line 22: delete "according to Patent Claim 2,".

Please replace the first and second paragraphs beginning on page 4, line 3 as follows:

The device illustrated in Fig. 1 works with a lamella system (LMI) mounted on the support surface (AF), above which a contact pressure and stretching device consisting of a stretchable membrane (M) is mounted. The leather piece (L) is laid on the lamellae (LMI) of the support surface (AF). By means of a vertical movement, the two parts are moved together and the space between them is sealed by a gasket (D) at the edge of the stretchable membrane (M) or the support surface (AF). The interstitial space, which is connected to a vacuum source (VQ), is evacuated. At the same time, the lamellae (LMI) are deployed, for example through a circular motion around a fixed pin (FB as shown in Fig. 3) by means of a drive device (AV), which may be mechanical, hydraulic or pneumatic, and carry with them the leather piece (L) laid on them.

In this way, the surplus water is slicked out, creases are smoothed and the surface is uniformly stretched. Channels, nubs, and perforations are designated by KNP in Figs. 1 and 2. The contact pressure device (AD) formed by the stretchable membrane (M) partly follows the movement of the lamellae, but is nevertheless moved by its own stretching mechanism.

As the lamellae (LM1) deploy, they expose a smooth support surface (AF) of high grade metal, heated by a heater (H). The stretched membrane (M) now continuously fixes the stretched leather piece (L) on the support surface (AF), simultaneously drying it through the heating effect. The moisture generated is drained through channels, nubbed surfaces, perforation and the like, either in the metal plate of the support surface (AF) or in the membrane (M). On completion of the stretching and drying process, the vacuum is released.

Please replace the paragraph at page 5, line 3 as follows:

Fig. 3 shows a design example of the a lamella system (~~LM1, LM2~~)LM, indicating the circular motion of the lamellae around a fixed point.